UNITED STATES ARMY CHAPLAIN SCHOOL

# THE CHAPLAIN MINISTRY IN A NUCLEAR WARFARE SITUATION

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
C-22

BY
CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) RICHARD L. PARK

3 DECEMBER 1973

# INTRODUCTION

There was no doubt after the detonation of the atomic bomb over Japanese cities in 1945 that the world would never be the same again. Nuclear weapons have vastly changed the nature of warfare. These changes have affected the functions of everyone in the armed services. The problem of this paper is to examine some of the ways the mission and role of the chaplain's ministry have been affected.

Henry Kissinger pictured our plight in this way:

> For many centuries, the legend of Prometheus, who sought to steal the sacred fire from the gods and who was punished by being forced to spend the rest of his life chained to a rock, has been the symbol of the penalties of presumptuous ambition. It was not understood that the punishment inflicted on Prometheus was an act of compassion; it would have been a much more severe penalty had the gods permitted their fire to be stolen. Our generation has succeeded in stealing the fire of the gods and it is doomed to live with the horror of its achievement.[1]

[1]Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p.65.

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## PREFACE

The objective for this paper was to update and clarify doctrine for the chaplain's ministry on a nuclear battlefield. The length of the paper has dictated only a summary of the problems confronting the chaplain's ministry.

I have tried to show the current assumptions about nuclear warfare and to discuss their implication for the chaplain's ministry.

CHAPTER I

THE NUCLEAR BATTLEFIELD

## Assumptions

We are not able to make certain assumptions which will determine how we prepare for nuclear warfare.

First, nuclear warfare will be introduced in a conventional warfare environment. In the past, most of us have thought of nuclear warfare in terms of intercontinental bombers striking at great cities and industrial sites. While this may happen, it is not the entire story.[1] In the Ottawa Conference it was agreed that NATO forces should establish a balance between conventional and nuclear forces.[2] However, many nations are prepared to use atomic weapons in almost any contingency. Heilbrunn sees conventional and nuclear weapons as complementary.[3]

On at least three occasions in recent history a limited use of nuclear weapons was considered. In February 1968 several nuclear physicists were went to Vietnam when 5000 U.S. Marines were threatened by 20,000-50,000 North

[1] G.C. Reinhardt and W.R. Kintner, Atomic Weapons In Land Combat (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1954), p.22.

[2] Otto Heilbrunn, Conventional Warfare in the Atomic Age (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p.25.

[3] Ibid., p.27.

Vietnamese. In November 1950 Nuclear weapons were considered following the intervention of the Chinese communists in the Korean War. In 1954 when French forces were on the defensive in Dien Bien Phu, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, urged the use of tactical nuclear weapons.[1] Henry Kissinger warns that from now on we must operate on the assumption that any war is likely to be a nuclear war.[2]

The second assumption is that a nuclear war will be an intense war limited to a time from 30-120 days.[3] The limited war is now an act of policy, as Kissinger says:

> As the power of modern weapons grows, the threat of all-out war loses its credibility and therefore its political effectiveness.[4]

## The Tactical Situation

The primary organizational change that atomic weapons will dictate is increased flexibility which arises from the absolute necessity for greater dispersion between units and unit mobility. Tactical operations will be characterized

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[1]Henry T. Nash, "Information and Decision Making in Limited Warfare,".Military Review 49(March 1969):p.80.

[2]Kissinger, Foreign Policy, p.14.

[3]Field Manual 100-30 (TEST), Tactical Nuclear Operations (Headquarters. Department of the Army, 1971) para., 2-2.

[4]Kissinger, Foreign Policy, p. 134.

by: (1) great dispersion of units both laterally and in depth, (2) redundancy of command and control headquarters, (3) frequent movement of units, (4) the employment of small, highly mobile tactical elements, and (5) the absence of a front line and the vulnerability of the rear.[1]

Vulnerability will be particularly threatening to all units. Because of this factor the tactical goal is to have no more than one company or firing battery in a single strike zone. The forward units will move almost nightly to prevent detection, and all personnel must remain in foxholes unless required outside.[2] These factors will make traditional chaplain coverage almost impossible.

The helicopter will become more valuable than ever on a nuclear battlefield. The two combat elements capable of withstanding the effects of nuclear attack are the soldier and the helicopter, these because they can disperse.[3] The lessons learned in Vietnam on the use of the helicopter indicate that it may be the most useful piece of equipment we possess for the nuclear battlefield.[4]

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[1]Reinhardt and Kintner, Atomic Weapons, p.31; FM 100-30, para.2-5; Heilbrunn, Conventional Warfare, p.32-33.

[2]FM 100-30, para.2-9,2-11; Heilbrunn, Conventional Warfare, p.31.

[3]R.S. Garlan, "Fluid Warfare in the Nuclear Age," Infantry 58 (May-June 1968), p.34.

[4]Major General Robert H. York, forward to R.S. Garlan, "Fluid Warfare in the Nuclear Age," Infantry (May-June 1968), p.33.

## The Human Situation

Our concern is the affect the nuclear battlefield has on the men involved. The history of warfare gives us many indications. Nuclear warfare, however, is different in that it will concentrate the effects of war in time and place. Every soldier in the forward combat areas or in the service and support areas to the rear is confronted with the prospect of new and strange circumstances. He is under constant threat of annihilation by enemy nuclear strikes. The soldier is exposed to death and destruction of a magnitude far beyond his imagination.[1] In disasters of nuclear magnitude even trained people will have difficulty responding with efficiency.[2]

John Hersey gives this description of a doctor's reaction to Hiroshima:

> Tugged here and there in his stockinged feet, bewildered by the numbers, staggered by so much raw flesh, Dr. Sasaki lost all sense of profession and stopped working as a skillful surgeon and a sympathetic man; he became an automaton, mechanically wiping, daubing, winding, wiping, daubing, winding.[3]

The same author describes the effect on the general population this way:

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[1] FM 100-30, para 5-16.

[2] Kissinger, Foreign Policy, p. 71.

[3] John R. Hersey, Hiroshima (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p.35.

> After the pika the entire population had been reduced to a common level of physical and mental weakness. Those who were able walked silently towards the suburbs and the distant hills, their spirits broken, their initive gone. They were so broken and confused that they moved and behaved like automatons.[1]

Regardless of these effects, the outcome of any war still depends on the men, and as General Powell reminds us "the ultimate decision will still be made by the man on the ground."[2]

There will be three main elements of the human situation to which the chaplain can minister. The main element on the battlefield will be fear. The second element will be the spread of rumors. The third is that a sense of isolation and hopelessness will be prevalent.

These elements can be countered by the chaplain who will: (1) demonstrate positive faith, (2) speak simply and listen understandingly, (3) counteract anxiety with information, and (4) accept men as he finds them.

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[1] Ibid., p.54-55.

[2] Major General Herbert B. Powell, "The Infantryman in the Atomic Age," Army Information Digest 13 (April 1958), p.39.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CHAPLAIN'S MINISTRY TO MASS CASUALTIES

The chaplain on a nuclear battlefield will be limited by many circumstances as he tries to fulfill his mission of bringing, "men to God and God to men." One of the most frustrating will likely be encountered as he tries to minister to the mass casualties created by any nuclear explosion. The problem will not be the kind of injuries but the simultaneous occurence of large numbers of casualties in a particular location.[1]

There are essentially three types of injuries which can be expected--blast injuries, burns, and nuclear radiation injuries. About one-half of thermal energy is released as blast, and injuries caused by falling and flying objects or by persons being blown against objects causes immediate injury. Burns accounted for approximately 50% of the deaths in Japan. In addition to bodily burns, the flash of explosions causes temporary and permanent blindness. Retinal burns can be experienced up to fifteen kilometers away from a twenty kiloton weapon.[2] Nuclear radiation injuries are most

[1]Reinhardt and Kinter, Atomic Weapons, p. 144.

[2]Field Manual 101-31-1 Staff Officers' Field Manual Nuclear Weapons Employment Doctrine and Procedures (Headquarter, Department of the Army, 1968) para.2-15.

insidious. All ground forces operating in a nuclear environment must expect exposure to radiation. Chaplains must be spiritually and emotionally prepared for ministering to an inimaginable number of injured and dying people.

Whenever a nuclear attack occurs, each command element from division through battalion and squadron forms a Control and Assessment Team (CAT) whose duty it is to enter the damaged area, determine condition of the unit, make reports and request assistance as required.[1] At present there is no chaplain space on the CAT, but there are several reasons for changing this procedure. First, the CAT will already be equipped to enter the disaster area. Second, immediate religious ministrations could be given by chaplains on CAT. Third, the presence of the chaplain can have a beneficial effect on the morale of the surviving soldiers. Fourth, the chaplains' presence in this time of danger and need would provide the chaplains the opportunity to fulfill their primary mission. At present the procedure is for the CAT to enter the area and request chaplain assistance when required.

Although chaplains are not employed on the CAT, they are expected to function on the Rescue, Labor and Decontamination Squads.[2] In this function the division chaplain designates

[1] Field Manual 61-100 The Division (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1968),p. C-39.

[2] Ibid., p. C-4.

three chaplain teams to be prepared to move into an area on a 30-minute notice and to operate with the medical teams.

During combat chaplains will be primarily concerned for the wounded and dying. In order to do this most efficiently, one Catholic and one Protestant chaplain will be required at each medical battalion clearing company. If available, additional chaplains can work at battalion aid stations, priority being given to those battalions most heavily committed. The brigade chaplains must be supported by the combat support and combat service support chaplain, Coordination for this must come from the division chaplain.

The Army doctrine of sorting or 'triage' must be clear to every chaplain working in a mass casualty environment. Triage is the sorting of patients by medical personnel according to the type and severity of the wound. The result should be a minimal time lag between injury and therapy and the greatest good for the largest number. The following categories have been established.

Those classified as minimal are those requiring the least medical care in order to return to duty. These include those with small lacerations, simple fractures and minor burns.

Those classified as immediate are those with more severe wounds but who can be expected to survive with relatively short-term treatment.

The delayed category would include those with fractures

of major bones, moderate lacerations and second and third degree burns over 20-30% of their body.

Casualties classified as expectant are those with critical injuries requiring long treatment. The doctrine of the most care for the largest number dictates that they will receive the least immediate medical care.

The chaplains at the sorting stations will realize that those in immediate and delayed categories will be evacuated as soon as possible, usually within hours. Their ministry, therefore, will give priority to the expectant.

In addition to his ministry to the physically injured, the chaplain must be prepared to minister to the psychological wounds of men. The man involved in the nuclear battle will have witnessed destruction and death in such magnitude and horror that his emotions can easily make him a casualty. The normal reactions to such disaster include a shaky feeling, profuse perspiring, nausea and confusion. Abnormal reactions may include: (1) physical reactions--severe nausea or paralysis, (2) panic reactions, (3) overactive reactions, or (4) depressive reactions.[1] The chaplain must be prepared to deal with these reactions in himself as well as in others. Treatment consists of simple, straightforward interviews, reassurances, rest food and participating in duty in the

[1]Field Manual 21-11, First-Aid for Soldiers (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1970), para. 63.

disaster area. Michihiko Hachiya reports in his diary:

> What we were trying to do probably was not worth much, but it helped our morale to think we were doing something.[1]

Two other chaplain ministries related to the mass casualty situation will be mass burials and letters of condolence. In nuclear warfare mass burials may well become necessary. Most chaplains now on active duty have not participated in a mass burial, but a great many have participated in mass, ecumenical memorial services. The experience gained in these would prove of value in mass burial situations.

The great numbers must not let the chaplain become numb to the living, however, and families of the dead must be written. Under the provisions of Army Regulation 600-66 the Commander or chaplain must perform this duty.

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[1]Michihiko Hachiya, Hiroshima Diary, Trans. by Warren Wells (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1955), p.21.

## CHAPTER III

## SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHAPLAINS' PREPARATION FOR NUCLEAR WARFARE

On the basis of the research required as background for this paper several considerations have surfaced which may be of help in planning for the contingency of nuclear warfare.

First, the division chaplain may have to exercise more command supervision of division chaplains. FM 16-5 states that "a chaplain may not exercise command" but that "he has the authority to exercise functions of operational control and supervision."[1]

Conditions of nuclear warfare will probably constitute emergency conditions in which the commander "may grant the division chaplain temporary operational control of division chaplain personnel"[2] This type of control by the division chaplain will be necessary to form the type chaplain teams to man the hospitals, aid stations, and reaction teams which nuclear warfare dictates.

Second, the unit chaplains, particularly those in brigades, will have to come up with unique ways of providing ministry

[1]Field Manual 16-5, The Chaplain (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1967),p.6.

[2]Ibid., p.45.

to small, widely dispersed units during static phases of warfare. Here are some suggested helps. Radio message may be helpful, either on civilian stations, Armed Forces Network, or short messages on tactical frequencies. Taped cassettes, prepared by unit chaplains, can bring messages which are devotional yet show the personal concern of the unit chaplain. Unit lay leaders at company/battery level can be trained and utilized. The Navy has been doing this for years. One layman in a company, equipped with one cassette and a little literature could conduct four Protestant worship services without ever saying a word. Printed literature can be very effective. Chaplains must still see their men personally as often as possible, and the proper use of the helicopter can make this more possible.

Supervisory chaplain, moreover, will have to be constantly aware of the necessity to rotate chaplains on the battlefield. The accumulated dose of radiation may not be noticed by the chaplain involved, but division chaplains must be aware of its accumulative effect and must rotate all chaplains involved. Chaplains to be used in this rotation may come from other units in the division, corps or Army, but supervisory chaplains at every level must be made aware of the necessity of rotation.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has been speculative. It has tried to spell out problem areas. The brevity required has made it a summary of some research, not a detailed report. The following conclusions emerge from the study.

1. Nuclear warfare will probably develop on a conventional war battlefield.
2. The main problems confronting the chaplains previous to battle will be that all units will be small and widely dispersed.
3. During the battle chaplains will be concerned with ministering to great numbers of casualties.
4. In static phases the chaplains will have to use every resource available to continue their ministry of bringing God to men and men to God.

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